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*An early view down Pine Street, with the Opera House in the right foreground. Taken prior to 1907, when the Lodi Arch was constructed.*

## *Last Years of the Lodi Opera House*

by Maurice Hill

*[In our Fall 1991 edition, we covered the first two exciting years of Charles Van Buskirk's Lodi Opera House from its construction in 1904 through 1906. Following is a history of the latter years. — Editor]*

1907 was a busy year for the Lodi Opera House. A procession of theatrical productions followed one another, some excellent, some fair and some with little to recommend them. An incomplete list and a brief summary of some of these attractions follows:

"The Missouri Girl" was the headliner for Friday, January 4, 1907. Frank Farrel as Zeke and Sadi Raymond as Daisy Grubb were the leading characters in the old-fashioned melodrama. Specialties were introduced between the acts.

Pictures of the Burns-O'Brien prize fight at Los Angeles were shown at the local house of entertainment on Jan. 7, 1907. A write-up in a local paper preceding the showing of the pictures in Lodi is written in defense of the sport and makes interesting reading. Therefore, let it speak for itself:

"The Burns-O'Brien pictures are likely to have one odd effect upon all beholders at the Lodi Opera House on January 7th. They are more likely to win thousands of friends for the art of pugilism, and to make boxing better understood and less repugnant to church-goers and to the multitudes who never saw a fistic fray. The pictures showing every detail of a battle which was one of the fiercest and most desperate in history, yet show nothing hideous, nothing sickening, nothing brutal or disgusting. They show, in all

the fair clearness of a California day, two superb young athletes, struggling, gamely, with muffled hands and stringent rules to govern. They show a hurricane of blows and punches, but they do not show, in all the rounds, any such injury or horror as can be viewed after the first fierce scrimmage on any football field. It is impossible to see these pictures without realizing that boxing, as it really exists, is simply a game of strength and courage, a game for strong young men to play and that the element of roughness and brutality is far less apparent than in many other pastimes. Women can see the Burns-O'Brien fight, as herein displayed, from end to end, and find not one thing to shock sensibilities or unninge their nerves.

"Popular prices will prevail at 25¢ for children and 50¢ for reserved seats, on



sale at Zimmerman's Pharmacy."

"Quincy Adams Sawyer," called the great rural play, was given at the local opera house on the evening of January 23, 1907. An advance notice for the play describes what was termed "the famous husking bee scene in which color and humor of the rural festivity are so vividly presented that the audience enters into the spirit of the situation and forgets they are in the theatre. Players on one side and lookers on the other seem to mingle in wholesome enjoyment."

The cast had William A. Williams in his original role of Quincy in the New York, Chicago and Boston success.

West's Minstrels were to appear at the Opera House January 31, 1907.

"Ole Olson," a comedy with Ben Hendricks playing the role of Ole was given at the Opera House on Feb. 5, 1907. The company playing in Lodi advertised itself as the original and only authorized company playing the comedy.

The next two engagements were for the plays "Happy Hooligan" and "The Belle of Japan." These plays were followed by "Jerry From Kerry" which played a one-night stand in Lodi on Feb. 18, 1907. Two free band concerts were scheduled for 3:30 and 7:30 p.m.

Murray and Mack were the attraction for an evening in mid-February 1907. "Nettie, the News Girl" a melodrama with a cast of fifteen players headed by Miss Isabelle Lowe,

was produced at the Opera House March 11, 1907.

"Free from superlative sensationism, and abounding in love, humor and all the rest that goes to make real and stage life, alike, entertaining — the scenic features are massive and beautiful — the tunnel scene, the old boat house on the East River and an old dock at Peck's Slip furnish a trio of scenic features well worth seeing."

"A Stranger in Town," a musical melange of singing, comedy and dancing, appeared at the Opera House April 1, 1907. Frank Beamish was the leading comedian in the show. The "Sacramento Star" called it a clever little musical comedy. It states further that "Beamish is a capable comedian, but hasn't been long in comedy — he is better known as a character actor." The "Star" reported the play was entitled to generous patronage.

Mahara's Minstrels came to town for the evening of May 11, 1907. It was termed "a big minstrel carnival in a revival of old-time minstrelsy." The company carried a dozen dusky creole girls for the chorus, and elegant scenery was provided. The program was made up of song hits, quartets, sextets, octets, marches, drills, cake walks and buck and wing dancing. The performance had "more show in five minutes than ordinary companies give in an hour."

There was also an olio of pleasing

specialties which concluded with a one-act musical comedy accompanied by Susie's Band.

A street parade was an additional attraction the day of the show. It is interesting to note what the Prescott, Arizona paper had to say about the company. It begins by praising the company and states that "Richard & Pringle's Georgian Minstrels have been considered the leaders but Mahara's clever troupe is now the superior in several ways. George Taylor ranks as clever an end man as the famous Billy Richards..."

"The Bogus Prince" a New York musical comedy by Fernes and Nutting with Willie Robinson, "The Emperor of Mirth" and a chorus of 30 including 21 vocal numbers, played at the Opera House May 17, 1907.

On the evenings of May 24, 25, 1907 the Lodi High School, along with others, presented "Pickaninny Minstrel" at the Lodi Opera House. There was a cast of 100 under the direction of Mrs. Runcie and the affair was publicized as being "strictly up to date with 150 laughs in 150 minutes."

There appears to have been a lull in theatrical productions during June, July and August with the exception of a Beatty Brothers show advertised for July 31, 1907.

The original Tokay Carnival took place Sept. 19-21, 1907. At the Opera House a program was put on every afternoon and evening. David F. Perkins supported by Lappin & Co. appeared in Hendrik Ibsen's playlet, "Friendship". Harland and Robinson, the European Musical Comiques were on the bill, also Robison and Grant, the Lilliputan comedians, the Bartelmes Novelty Foot Jugglers and Olive Reed who sang "I Left You Because I Loved You" beautifully illustrated, along with two sets of novelty motion pictures titled (a) "The Near-Sighted Cyclist" and (b) "The Nurse's Strike."

On October 12, 1907 "Mrs. Temple's Telegram" was the attraction at the local house of entertainment. "No farce in recent years has been acclaimed so emphatic a success as this merry message of mirth." The cast was headed by Franklyn Underwood.

"Sis of New York" drew a small audience at the Opera House on the evening of October 19, 1907.

"The Pride of New York" a musical comedy appeared at Lodi Opera House on the evening of Oct. 24, 1907.



*A parade marches down Pine Street, past the old Lodi Opera House.*



The plot is a satire on the famous American beauty, "The Broadway Girl." "And to those who have seen her on the Great White Way, as Broadway is called, it will be readily understood that a chorus of 12 carefully selected beauties will be a treat to the theatre going public of this city."

The cast included Ben Dillon and Maud K. Williams who was with the Kolb & Dill Company for a long time.

Professor Don Smith of the University Extension Department was at the Opera House October 25, 1907. He gave the first of a series under the auspices of the Woman's Improvement Club of Lodi. The subject of the lecture was "Spain" and it was illustrated with stereoptican views taken during his travels in that country.

Manager Fred Lee of the Opera House engaged Lee Willard and Company for two evenings, October 28 and 29, 1907. "Mr. Willard is recognized as one of the most promising young starts of the Western Coast and he has surrounded himself with the strongest company of ladies and gentlemen that he has ever carried."

On the first evening, Mr. Willard and his company appeared in "The Texas Ranger" and on the second night "Little Lord Fauntleroy" was given. Mr. Willard played Lord Fauntleroy and Miss Ollie Cooper appeared as Little Lord Fauntleroy. The leading lady for most of the company's productions for the season was Miss Vera Hane Beach. Others of note in the company were character actress Georgie Woodthorpe of San Francisco, Oakland and Portland who was for several seasons a member of Henry W. Bishop's players in both Ye Liberty Playhouse, Oakland and the Majestic and Central theatres in San Francisco; also in the company were Edith and Fred Cooper.

After Lodi's first festival in September of 1907 the festival committee found that there was a need of \$500 in order to complete payment of bills. The committee conceived the idea of having a big benefit performance at the Opera House on November 5, 1907 to raise the required amount.

Among those participating from Stockton and Lodi were the following: Cyrus Brownlee Newton, the well-known entertainer, George Lawrence who was to give a triple-tongue cornet solo and vocalists Misses Lulu Villinger, Jessie Thornton, Nona Keeney, Horace Vincent and the Williams

Quartet of Stockton. Manager of the festival, Charlie Ray, was slated to give a three minute talk on "How it feels to bring off a carnival." King Hogamus of the festival was to appear in his regal and Oriental splendor and Queen Zinfandel (Bertha De Almada) "in all her charming beauty, will give a reading."

Misses Jennie & Ella Jahant were on the program for a recitation, and an instrumental number of the piano. Misses Maizie and Lucy Taylor were to play a guitar and mandolin duet and were also to appear in a number with George Lawrence.

Robert Patton's Orchestra of six pieces, which was in great demand at this time, was to furnish music during the interims of the entertainment and also for the dance following the show. A buffet lunch was also on the agenda during the evening.

On November 14, 15, 1907, Ivy Parlor, Lodi Native Daughters put on what was termed a floral fiesta at the local Opera House.

There were many floral decorated booths with charming girls in charge. Several new ideas were introduced in the system of booths. For instance, there was the "post office booth" where the inquirer for mail was certain to get just the news most desired. Then there was the "Japanese bowling alley" and the "laundry" booths which provoked much fun.

On the opening night two short farces were offered "The Ghost in the Boarding School" and "The Triumph of Pauline." The following evening a novelty was presented in the shape of "Ma Dusenberry and Her Girls Out on Their First Tower."

Refreshments of ice cream and cake or coffee were available upstairs while lemonade and other soft drinks were furnished on the first floor. Dancing followed each evening's performance. Admission was 25¢, 35¢ and 50¢.

The activities at the Lodi Opera House in 1907 were concluded with a two-evening indoor carnival which took place on December 30th and 31st. The affair was in the nature of a benefit for the Lodi-Tokay Band.

The Lodi Band of 22 pieces took part as well as Dietrich's Royal Dutch Band of Stockton which played "We're Here Because We're Here". There was a country store and side shows and a charity ball. There was a complete change of program each evening. Professor C.B. Newton and wife put on a

humorous sketch entitled, "A Pair of Crazies."

The first production at the Lodi Opera House for 1908 appears to have been the George B. Edwards & Co. in a play titled "Girl of the Streets". It was given on the evening of January 21, 1908. The play was a melodrama with unusual scenery and specialty numbers. Berua Reinhardt was the leading lady. "One of the features of the show is the work of Little Alice Berry who is considered one of the cleverest children on the stage. This alone is a whole show."

"A Desperate Change" the great Pittsburg tragedy by Theodore Kremer was at the Opera House February 8, 1908. The play was founded on the life of the infamous Biddle Brothers. The production was given by the Majestic Amusement Company. After considerable trouble this management managed to secure the horse and sleigh in which Mrs. Saffel, the wife of the warden of Pittsburg Prison, assisted in the escape of the Biddle Brothers. The police department also furnished the pistols, handcuffs and clothes used in securing these noted criminals after the long flight in the snowdrifts where the horse, tired of his long drive, had given out.

On February 13, 1908, "A Royal Slave" appeared at the local house of amusement "with all its wealth of special scenery, bright and catchy specialties. This piece which has attained such an enviable reputation and secured such a hold on the hearts of theatre-goers from one end of this broad land to the other is from the pen of Clarence Bennett, author of 'The Holy City' another notable success.

"Mr. Bennett has located his scenes near the City of Mexico and based the fabric of the play on events which actually occurred during the brief reign of the unfortunate Emperor Maximilian. The great treasure, the secret of which was so loyally and so jealously guarded by El Aguilla (The Eagle) who, although a serf, traced his lineage from the royal Montezumas, is founded on fact. The success of this piece has been so phenomenal to America that the firm has decided to present it next year in England. A number of Lodi people saw the play in Stockton last night and were highly pleased with the production."

On February 15, 1908 "Quincy Adams Sawyer" was the local attrac-





*Looking east on Pine Street on a rainy day in 1914. The Lodi Opera House is on the right.*

tion. It was advertised as a popular rural play with strong comedy features and yet possessing touches of real pathos. "The rising curtain discloses the exterior of a farmhouse in the folds of a New England snow storm. A moment is given to this picture and then the front wall of the house disappears and the action of the play goes on within it. The storm without is indicative of the stress within and the visual impression intensifies sympathy with the tribulations of the characters. Hope blossoms into fruition as the action proceeds and joy succeeds grief."

On March 18, 1908 "Slave of the Orient" was presented in Lodi. On March 24 and 25, 1908 John B. Rogers presented the musical fantasy, "Bi Bi", a comedy of toys. It was claimed to have been staged more than 1,000 times throughout the United States. It was under the auspices of the Lodi Native Daughters as a benefit to gain funds for the Grand Parlor Fund. It appears that it was in the nature of a melodious extravaganza and replete with sparkling dialogue and choruses.

The production drew upon the best talent in Lodi, more than one hundred of the young people being seen in the choruses and fancy dancing. Mr. Rogers, the out-of-town producer and director stated that this show compared favorably with the professional productions on the road. "Bi Bi" was

composed by Charles Bernard, the noted English playwright whose "Mother Goose", "Country Fair", etc. were famous throughout the country.

"Ma's New Husband" was listed for an appearance at the Opera House, March 20, 1908 while on April 18, 1908, "Looking for a Wife" played.

"The Bogus Prince" with Willie Robinson and 40 others was billed for May 17, 1908. Beautiful chorus girls were to appear, while the play was said to abound in much mirth and music. The Colonial Quartette, also presenting "An Artists Dream" appeared locally May 22, 1908.

One of the most notable appearances at the Lodi Opera House was that of the Great Counter Tenor, Richard Jose who appeared on May 29, 1908 in "Don't Tell My Wife." His most unusual voice brought him much acclaim and he was termed by music critics as "a modern Jenny Lind" and as "a Patti in trousers." He was extremely popular in the early 1900's and his voice is preserved in many gramophone records. July 9, 1908, Fred Lee, manager of the Lodi Opera House announced that he was having moving picture equipment installed. His intention was to have shows nightly with a choice of 21 reels every week and a change of program nightly. This was intended for the off-season of traveling road shows.

Moving pictures of the Oberammergau Passion Play were shown at the Opera House July 15, 16, 1908. A lady soloist from Sacramento sang, "The Holy City" and other songs with Perry Howe of Lodi at the piano.

The big attraction at the Opera House for August 26, 1908 was the appearance of the noted comedians Kolb & Dill in the musical, "Lonesome Town." May Nammary appeared in "At the Old Crossroads" August 31, 1908. "Whipple Creek" was at the Opera House November 2, 1908. "Uncle Josh Perkins" was slated for November 11, 1908 followed by "On Gay Broadway" November 13. This production was a musical comedy.

The first of a series of four concerts by the Lodi Band was given November 20, 1908. Richard & Pringle's Minstrels held forth on November 23 and "Hans and Nix" was the theatrical offering for November 25, 1908.

The Philharmonic Quintette came to the Opera House December 1, 1908 under a series of entertainments sponsored by the Woman's Club of Lodi. The Quintette was made up of young ladies. Among these singers there was also a reader and a whistler.

The old melodrama "Uncle Tom's Cabin" played at the Opera House December 9, 1908. There does not appear to have been too many theatrical productions at the Lodi Opera House



during the first half of 1909. "The Merchant of Venice" was at the Opera House March 20, 1909. In the latter part of May there was a local talent show put on by the Lodi Woman's Club and was for the purpose of raising money for the club's needs.

"Up to Freddie" was at the local house of entertainment on June 4, 1909. The Ninth Annual Commencement of the Lodi Branch of the Interstate Conservatory of Music was held at the Opera House June 17, 1909. Those taking part were Ada Stemler, Hazel Ham, Perry Emmett Houwe (pianist), Mrs. Ethel Hurd Comfort, Bessie Cassandro Swallow and Alma Van Valkenburgh. Presentation of diplomas was made by Rev. F.M. Washburn of the local Congregational church.

By this time, the Opera House had a new manager. F.A. Gesa, taking over the management from Fred Lee who had proved a successful and popular manager from 1905-1909.

The Ed Redmond Company played a two-night stand at Lodi on the evenings of June 24 and 25. The troupe was said to be excellent and favorably known in this section of the country. The company had played previously in Lodi and won many friends. To its original strength of cast had been added such people as Miss Alta Phipps, Mr. Charlie Gunn, Mr. Griffith Wray, Mr. Sydney Paine and others.

On the first evening's performance, "Are You A Mason" was given and in addition to the play, Miss Alta Phipps sang a number of the latest songs and Mr. Charlie Gunn was on the bill with songs and a monologue. The second evening's play was "The Man on the

Box."

Erlinger's New York Band appeared at the local show house on the evening of June 29, 1909. The Newman-Foltz Company played three evenings at the Opera House, performing "Divorcons" on the 18th of October, "Camille" on the 19th and "Sappho" on the 20th.

On October 25, 1909 the Persee-Mason Company appeared in "The Singing Bandits." This was an operatic comedy and featured the well-known soprano, Edith Mason who formerly was a star with the Tivoli Opera House in San Francisco.

"Three Weeks" was the play for November 8, 1909. This was based on the novel "Three Weeks" by Elinor Glyn.

Business seems to have fallen off at the Opera House in 1910. De La Geneste, hypnotist, had an engagement at the Lodi Theatre in March. By October interest so lagged in things theatrical that only two tickets were sold for the performance of the Italian Grand Opera Company which was to have played at the Opera House on the evening of October 25, 1910.

After waiting until time to commence, the two people who had paid to hear the opera company were refunded the price of admissions. The Lodi paper in commenting on the affair called it "a frost" and concluded that Lodians didn't go for opera. It was noted that in other places, where the opera company had appeared, there was a good attendance.

The theatrical productions at the Lodi Opera House for 1911 consisted mainly of the following: Chapins portrayal of Abraham Lincoln was at the Opera House the afternoon and even-

ing of January 10, 1911. The program was divided into a prologue followed by characterizations of Lincoln as the man, the maker of men, the hero and the victor and martyr.

On March the 7th, Richard Jose, the famous counter tenor was again at the Opera House in "Silver Threads". One of the songs identified with him as "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

"The Isle of Jewels" was a show put on by the pupils of the Lodi Emerson School. It was given January 18, 1911. The entertainment was produced in order to raise money for new cement walks at the school. The "Isle of Jewels" was an operetta in two acts. Bauer's Orchestra rendered music while between acts, Messrs. Snyder & Lucas gave readings that were humorous and otherwise.

Another local effort was the light opera, "Princess B" given by the Woman's Improvement Club of Lodi on January 27th. Mrs. Jack V. Bare had the leading part in the operetta.

Max Dill of the famous Kolb and Dill combination brought a company of 50 to Lodi on February 5, 1911.

On March 20th, "A Trip to the Circus" was the local attraction. It was in the nature of a rural comedy. The Lodi High School gave a farce "What Happened to Jones" at the Opera House on March 24th.

"The Man on the Box" with Gus Arthur in the leading role held forth at the theatre on March 25th. "The Climax", a comedy, was given locally April 1, 1911. On April 7th, "The Girl of the Hour," a musical comedy played at the Opera House.

Frederick Ward, the noted Shakesperian actor appeared at the



*Performers in the 1914 minstrel show, produced by the Woman's Club, pose on-stage.*



Opera House April 20, 1911, in "Julius Caesar."

For a year now the Tokay Orchestra had played for dances every Wednesday evening at the Opera House. Other groups, such as the Pythian Sisters, held dances on special occasions.

On May 16, 1911, this type of event ended. The Lodi Opera House which was under lease the last two years by F.A. Glesea, was let to C. Ray Van Buskirk, son of C.L. Van Buskirk, owner of the building. The rental fee was reduced from \$25 to \$20 a night. The plan of running the house was considerably changed. From this time on there were no more dances.

As the Opera House was not then on the theatrical circuit, it was more than likely that good traveling troupes would not receive bookings there.

Mr. Glesea had for the two previous years, tried to bring first class attractions, light opera, tragedy, vaudeville. As a general rule, these met with little or no success, as the public would not attend.

One of the main reasons for the lack of attendance at the Opera House was the success of moving pictures. Stockton had its "Idle Hour Theatre" on Sutter Street for 5¢. Lodi had "The Leisure Hour Theatre" in the basement of the Madison Building with four reels of pictures. Matinee was 5¢ and evening performances 5¢ and 10¢.

Then on July 27, 1911, the new Tokay Theatre on Elm Street was completed and open for business. They had two moving picture machines and electric fan ventilation for audience comfort.

The theatrical productions at the Lodi Opera House for the year 1912 consisted of the following: "A Strenuous Life" by the Lodi High School seniors took place at the Opera House on the evening of March 29th. The author of the play was Richard Walton Tully. Every seat available in the Opera House was taken.

A special treat was the appearance of the Treble Clef Society of Lodi Union High School under the direction of Miss Agnes Wright. Those participating were Henry Rinn, Leslie Johns, Leslie Rodgers, Clifford Mason, Ernest Folendorf, Forrest Gum, Ernest Setzer, Wil Peirano and the Misses Frances Wright, Genevieve Morse, Georgia Henderson, Carrie Ellis and Dorothy Sargent.

Marcus Newfield & Son loaned furniture and the Lodi Cloak & Suit House, owned by Mr. Lyons, loaned the costumes. The Lodi Hotel furnished palms.

On Wednesday evening, May 2, 1912, the Woman's Improvement Club of Lodi staged what was called a Baby Opera. The production was under the direction of Mrs. Katherine Couric, who at this time had produced a similar Baby Opera in Sacramento.

The designation of the extravaganza was, in a strict sense of the word, a misnomer, for many of the participants were in their teens. The majority of the performers were between 10 and 12 years of age with a sprinkling of younger children.

The complete program follows:

**PART I:** Opening Chorus-Miriam Madison, Roberta Brown and the Baby Opera Chorus.

**PART II:** Specialty, Rye Dance-Una Abbott and

Frances Miller.

**PART III:** A Visit to Doll Land. French Dolls-Lucille Buck, Frances Scott, Dorothy Spiekerman, Ellen Channell, Margaret Williams, Nannie Ruth Biggs and Dorothy Lucas. Dutch Dolls-Elizabeth Williams, Helen Chase, Caroline Roper, Elizabeth Biggs, Emily White. Japanese Dolls-Alma Edwards, Margaret Nelson, Dorothy Rich. Songs: "Dear Little Dollies" and "Ach My" by Dutch Dolls; "Pinky Panky Poo" by Japanese Dolls; "Oh You Beautiful Doll" by the French Dolls; Mother Goose Melodies. Soloists-Frances Scott, Lucille Buck and Dorothy Spiekerman.

**PART IV:** "Tim-Buc-Too" and "Little Monkey"-Myron Tower, Randolph Smith, Clarence Hanna, Clifton Montgomery, Lazaar Friedberger, Eugene Smith, Fred Gilbeau, Clifton Moore and Billy Brown.

**PART V:** Spanish Dance-Una Abbott.

**PART VI:** Wooing of the Flowers. Poppies-Lurine Goldsworthy, Marjorie Spiekerman, Isabelle Chappelaine, Dorothy Perryman, Clara Wright, Evelyn Aronhalt, Elma Schroeder, Vivian Tennyson, Madeline Percival, Norine Edwards.

**PART VII:** Rosebuds-Merle Vassar, Nadine Wells, Lot-ta Weihe, Carry Little, Verna Young, Berniece Rinfret, Ruth Montgomery, Lois Blodgett, Gladys Crane.

**PART VIII:** "Sail, Baby, Sail"-Elizabeth Biggs and the "Goodnight Babies".

**PART IX:** The Boogie Man

**PART X:** "Wop-Wop-Wop"-Jack Lyons, Soloist and the Dandy Dagoes-Bobbie Pickering, Oswald Ed-dleman, Paul Perrin, Bobbie Peterson, Le Moin Beckman, Allen Thompson and Herbert Wittmayer.

**PART XI:** "I've Got a Pain in my Sawdust"-Lurine Goldsworthy, a very sick doll.

**PART XII:** "I'd Like to Live in Loveland With a Girl Like You"-Una & Helen Abbott, Dorothy Willms, Margaret Willms, Marian Schu, Vernon Steele, Wilma Clark, Louise Hussey, Hazel Folendorf, Mae Perrin, Geraldine Copp, Hattie Benedict, Joy Enlow, Pauline Roach, Frances Schilling, Margaret Beckman, Anna Bauer, Annie Wentland, Georgie Bowling, Mary Hudson.

**PART XIII:** Indian Scene, Soloists-Alzada Cutts, Emelie Gordon, Bernice LeMoin. Indian Maidens-Roberta Brown, Lillie Bender, Philoma Ferguson, Ethel Wynatt, Agnes Watkins, Sydney Chase, Delcea Squire, Miriam Madison, Margaret Brauer, Rosetta Pearson, Elma Bender, Mary Hudson, Alzada Cutts, Florence Bauer, Ruth Meissner, Ruth McNees, Susie Black, Vesta McMahon, Gladys Burson, Otillie Weihe, Veda Roper, Ralphine Mills, Grace McCleary, Clovis Krumb, May Schilling, Ruth Stanfield, Blossom Kilgore, Emilie Gordon, Bernice LeMoin, Arlene Capp and Urena Hawkins.

In the review of the Baby Opera in the Lodi Sentinel, it was noted that "histrionic history was made in Lodi Thursday evening when the Baby Opera was presented to a packed house at the Opera House. The hundred or more little boys and girls went through the 13 numbers with a display of talent that would make some professionals ashamed of themselves. While the opera was not a finished product, in any sense, there was enough real acting to amply repay one in attendance for their time and money. Miss Katherine Couric of Alabama staged the opera and the wonder is that she drilled so well the performers in the short time given to rehearsals. The Women's Improvement Club arranged the show and netted about \$55 for its trouble.



*A black-face number from the 1914 Minstrel Show.*



"All the solos and choruses were accompanied by John Bauer on the violin and Miss Ellen Bauer at the piano. Bauer's Orchestra rendered good music during the intermissions."

On the afternoon of May 9, 1912, Governor Hiram W. Johnson delivered an address at the Lodi Opera House in advocacy of Theodore Roosevelt's nomination for U.S. president.

"A number of La Follette followers were in the audience at the Opera House to hear Governor Johnson's speech Thursday afternoon. They did nothing disgraceful which is the reverse of his speech in Stockton Thursday evening when La Follette followers filled the four front rooms. They kept interrupting the governor. What they did will forever remain a blot upon the name of the county seat. When Johnson spoke in Lodi, he received the respect that is due a governor of this state."

The 1912 graduating class from Lodi High School held its exercises at the Opera House on June 14. The program was as follows: German Quartet - Helen Clark, Leslie Johns, Muriel Needham and Henry Rinn. Vocal Solo - Pearl Lucas. Class Legacy - Muriel Needham. Vocal Solo - Helen Clark. Play, "Cupid at Vassar" in four acts.

Those in the cast were Leslie Johns, Henry Rinn, Will Peirano, Beth Rathbun, Genevieve Morse, Vera Coleman, Emma Chapdelain, Mabel Durston, Georgia Henderson.

The Lodi Opera House was used for various public affairs other than theatrical productions on numerous occasions. Samples of this were the appearance of Gov. Johnson on May 9 and that of Irving B. Bristol on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 3. Mr. Bristol was the superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League and he urged his hearers to vote the rural district dry.

The Athenia Dramatic and Concert Company of Sacramento appeared at the local theatre on Nov. 8, 1912 under the auspices of the Woman's Improvement Club. A small audience turned out for the performance although the newspaper review noted that the concert merited a crowded house. Special mention and praise was given to the singing of Fred Setzer of Lodi. Miss Jessie McCall of Lodi acted as accompanist for the singers. No advertising notice appeared in the local paper ahead of this show so no doubt that accounted for the small attendance.

The University of California Glee Club gave a concert at the Opera House Nov. 22. The singers were made up of college boys and it was recorded that a splendid program was given to a good sized audience. The program included chorus singing and Vaudeville stunts and was reported to be the best Glee Club ever sent out by Berkeley. Albert Rinn of Lodi took a prominent part in the vocal work and "his singing showed that much attention had been given to the culture of his voice."

"Queen Esther," a dramatic cantata was given at the Lodi Opera House on the evenings of January 6 and 7, 1913. The production was under the auspices of the Methodist Church and was directed by George L. Howes of Los Angeles. The cantata, in operatic form, required three large choruses, and the costuming was beautiful and according to Oriental fashions. One hundred and forty Lodians participated. Fifty voices were needed for the Persian chorus, fifty voices for the Jewish chorus and forty voices for a children's chorus.

In reviewing the production, the Lodi Sentinel gave special praise to Mrs. Addine Beckman in the leading part of Queen Esther and said she was easily the star of the show. The review went on to say, "This talented vocalist appears at her best and her rich voice seems suited to the difficult part of Esther, the queen — the work of Mrs.

Beckman is indeed beautiful as is, also, that of Fred Setzer as Mordecai."

**CAST OF CHARACTERS:** Esther, the beautiful queen-Mrs. Addine Beckman; Haman, the king's counsellor-Albert Rinn; Mordecai, chief of the Jews-Fred Setzer; Prophetess-Miss Bessie Dunton; Scribe-R. Leslie Johns; Persian Princesses-Miss Alice Keast, Miss Dolly Thompson, and Miss Alice Pearson; Ahasuerus, the king-Professor George Leonard Howes; Zeresh-Miss Frances Wright; Harbonah, herald-Homer Green; Mordecai's sister-Miss Castle Gammon; High priest-E. F. Boese; Guards-J.W. Shattuck, Al Hill, L.H. Rinn, Homer Green; Accompanist-Miss Jessie McCall.

"He's the Guy", an original play by the Junior High School class was given at the Opera House Jan. 17, 1913. This play was proceeded by a playlet titled, "Mrs. Flynn's Lodgers." The authors of the junior play were Helen Limbaugh, Alice Kange, Lucille Le Feber, Irene Cary, Albert Randolph, Helen Mundy, Grace Stanley, Ian Strange, George Chapdelaine, Joe Declusion, Addie Weibe, Bernice Weber, Mildred Westlake and Clyde Garner.

"The Whole Year Round", a show put on by the Emerson School pupils played at the Opera House on Feb. 28. The characters consisted of Summer, Winter, Autumn, Spring, A Stranger, Queen of the May, An Attendant, Five Little Elves and a Chorus of the Four Seasons, attendants, woodland elves, etc. Jack Lyons portrayed the part of King Winter.

The show was heralded as a huge success netting about \$105 above expenses and providing money for equipment and improvement of the school ground.



*From left: Gwen Fisher, Leah Benedict, Ralphine Mills, Castle Gammon, Lil Ferdun, Merle Scott, and Blossom Kilgore, (one girl out of the picture).*



The senior class of Lodi High School presented a play "The Cabinet Minister" at the Opera House on March 14.

The Woman's Improvement Club of Lodi gave what was termed "A 20th Century Vaudeville Show" at the Lodi Opera House on Friday evening, April 18, 1913. The program was lengthy and varied. One of the acts was in the nature of a series of incidents, shown by poses, in the lives of a number of noted women. This act was called, "A Dream of Fair Women" and was arranged by Miss Katherine Field, one of the teachers at the Lodi High School. It was read by Miss Jennie Jahant. Some of the characters were: Helen of Troy-Miss Helen Clark; Iphigenia-Miss Esther Bowen; Cleopatra-Mrs. Ralph Clark (Lodi's first Grape Festival queen); Jephthah's daughter-Mrs. C.B. Tennyson; Fair Rosamona-Mrs. W.E. Riggs; Margaret, daughter of Sir Thomas Moore-Mrs. D.D. Smith; Joan of Arc-Mrs. F.A. Henning; Eleanor of Castile-Mildred Stannard.

Many other acts followed. In the newspaper write-up regarding the affair, the Lodi Sentinel reported among other things that "Mrs. Ralph Clark as Cleopatra captured her audience. This graceful and accomplished girl posed during the recital in a manner that proclaimed her a natural actress."

W.F. Reis, noted Socialist orator appeared at the Opera House on June 14. His subject was "The Difference Between Men & Mules". He was an author of a series of books. A small but interested audience turned out to hear Mr. Reis and it was noted that "he is one of the cleverest and ablest

speakers of the Socialist party. Himself, a wealthy man making investments, doing all he can under the present system, he gives of himself and his means without stint to overthrow a system where the man that works the most has the least, and the man that works the least has the most."

The senior class of Lodi High School for 1913 had their graduating exercises at the Opera House on June 20.

It cannot help but be noticed that the Lodi Opera House by this time was seldom used as a medium for the production of the traveling road shows. During the first half of 1913 productions were entirely confined to those staged by local talent. The reason is obvious: by 1913, and even previously, the day of moving pictures had arrived and local patrons were packing the theatres for this type of entertainment.

One of the last presentations at the Opera House was "The Merry Minstrel Maids" on Wednesday, October 14, and Thursday, October 15, 1914. The directors of the Woman's Club of Lodi produced the show to raise money for the club's building fund. Adult admission was 50¢. children 35¢.

The first day of the show, there was a parade of bedecked automobiles with the Merry Maids and special guest Miss Gloriana Dockstader who helped direct and star as Misses Topsy and Turvy Lightfoot.

Of the 190 active members in the Woman's Club, some of those in the show were: Mmes. John Montgomery, George Rich, Fordyce Roper, Dempsey Smith, James Nelson, George Moore,

Al Friedberger, Hillard Welch, Allen Dougherty, Charles Ferdun, William Thomayer, and Lee Jones. Also participating were Misses Castle Gammon, Hazel LeMoine, Ralphine Mills and Leah Benedict.

Today, little remains to recall to memory this chapter of Lodi's past. The structure which once housed the Opera House has been known since 1919 as the Newfield Building. The Opera House which comprised the entire upper story is no more. The stage and balcony have disappeared.

Only in the mind's eye can one reconstruct the stage with its curtain showing a painted scene in the center and about which were grouped advertisements for local business firms, the orchestra pit below the front of the stage, the rear and east side galleries and the many rows of seats separated by a center aisle. As one looks at this scene in retrospect, with the rows filled to capacity with fashionably dressed Lodians, the orchestra playing an opening overture and the curtain rising on an animated play or light opera, a sense of sadness and loss is felt. One can see the curtain of the Lodi Opera House descending on its final performance, the crowd leaving the auditorium and the bright lights going out one by one. The Lodi Opera House is no more — it belongs to history.



A dusty view east on Pine Street. The opera house is on the right.

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